

REVOLUTIONARY VERSE

IN CELEBRATION OF AMERICA

250

*From the
Tennessee Society
Sons of the American Revolution*

Featuring "A Toast to the Father of Our Nation" and
verses of contemplation and humor of American
Patriots

BY; RICK LAWS

Printed in the United States of America

MMXXV

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Introduction

This "chapbook" derives its name from the itinerant peddlers known as "chapmen," who originally sold these small, inexpensive books. These chapmen traveled through towns and rural areas, offering a variety of items, including these portable books. The term "chapman" comes from the Old English word "ceap," meaning "trade" or "business." Thus, "chapbook" refers to the books sold by these traders.

Chapbooks were often small, affordable, and easy to carry, making them ideal for peddlers. They contained a diverse range of materials, including poems, stories, religious texts, and political pamphlets. These chapbooks played a crucial role in making literature and other printed materials accessible to a broader audience, especially those in rural areas.

This particular chapbook features a selection of poems that I have included in other published works, at the end of the book, or in my chapter newsletters. The theme revolves around the American Revolutionary period, with some poems offering humor and others elevating the topic to a more thoughtful level.

*Tennessee Society
Sons of the American Revolution*

By; Rick Laws



A TOAST

It's important to honor the legacy of the man who played a pivotal role in shaping our nation's history.

Let's take a moment to reflect on Washington's enduring legacy and the principles he stood for — unity, perseverance, and service to the nation.

Toast to the Father of Our Nation

With raised glass on the anniversary of his birth February 22,
1732

Like winter oak that stands through fierce storms' might,
You bore the weight of nascent nation's dreams.
Though power's siren called through darkest night,
You chose instead to ford democracy's streams.

No crown adorned your brow, though it was yours,
Instead you planted seeds of freedom's tree.
Your legacy, like sunrise, still endures
In every heart that yearns to be made free.

So let us lift our glasses to your name,
First citizen, who shaped a nation's course.
Not perfect, yes, but history proclaims
Your steadfast vision as our guiding force.

Though centuries have passed since you drew breath,
Your virtues triumph over time and death.

SOLDIERS SHAVING

Poem inspired by the General Washington addresses about beard and cleanliness in the ranks of the Continental Army at Valley Forge, April 1778:

“Slovenliness and unsoldierly neglect in other respects ought rather to excite each man to compensate those blemishes by redoubled attention to the means which he has in his power; For instance, the soldier may always shave his beard, appear with clean hands and face & in general have an air of neatness which will be conspicuous under all disadvantages.”

<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-14-02-0402>



Soldiers Shaving

On the Twelfth Day, Shaving Must Be Clear
Clean-shaven soldiers, neatness held as pride,
No whisker dared to tarnish ranks' esteem,
In Washington's command, no beards abide.

The frontier harsh, yet razors still applied,
Through diaries and orders, clear the theme,
Clean-shaven soldiers, neatness held as pride.

No stubble left for fashion to provide,
A shadowed cheek disrupts the proper scheme,
In Washington's command, no beards abide.

Through discipline, such blemishes denied,
A soldier's honor bound to shave supreme,
Clean-shaven soldiers, neatness held as pride.

With razor's stroke, their dignity implied,
Their duty sharp, their ranks a polished dream,
In Washington's command, no beards abide.

To stray from this, their punishment supplied,
For slovenly neglect, provisions deem,
Clean-shaven soldiers, neatness held as pride,
In Washington's command, no beards abide.

POWDERED WIG

The American Revolution period provides such rich material for exploring the tension between European military traditions and the practical realities of warfare in North America.

The contrast between elaborate military dress codes and battlefield conditions was particularly stark during this conflict, as British officers had to adapt their traditional practices to the American wilderness and changing warfare tactics.



The Art of the Powdered Wig

Oh, hail the powdered wig, so fine and grand,
A crown of curls crafted by steady hand.
A soldier's pride, a warrior's flair,
Even in mud, you must show your care!"

With powder puffed and ribbons tied tight,
March into battle, a dazzling sight.
Redcoats may fear your musket's crack,
But it's your coiffure that makes them turn back.
The bayonet glints, the cannonballs roar,
Yet your wig's the masterpiece they adore.
"No dirt on this curl!" you sternly decree,
"Let's fight like gentlemen, fancy and free!"

But alas, the rain mocks your powdered grace,
Transforming your wig to a soggy disgrace.
No "Macaroni" now, just a man of despair,
As the mud claims your elegance, strand by strand, hair by
hair.

Still, onward you march with a nod and a grin,
Determined your fashion will still win the din.
For to be "A Real Character" at this grand parade,
Is to fight with finesse, your style displayed.

So let others wear rags, unkempt and plain,
You'll conquer with curls, through wind, snow, and rain.
For a wig is not just an accessory, dear friend,
It's a statement of power—style to the end!

VALLEY FORGE 1777-1778

In the bitter winter of 1777, General George Washington led his weary Continental Army to set camp at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. After months of hard campaigning and retreat, the soldiers arrived cold, hungry, and ill-equipped. Their clothes hung in tatters, and many marched with feet wrapped in rags, leaving bloody footprints in the snow.

Valley Forge was no battlefield, but the struggle for survival was relentless. Disease, exposure, and starvation claimed more men than musket fire ever had. The camp became a test of endurance and patriotism. Without proper shelter, the soldiers labored to build crude log huts, each packed with smoke and the scent of damp earth, offering little comfort from the freezing winds.

And yet, amid the suffering, the spirit of revolution endured. Washington's leadership held the army together. That winter, a Prussian officer, Baron von Steuben, arrived to instill new discipline. Under his sharp eye, ragged farmers were forged into a trained fighting force. Bayonet drills replaced despair, and a new sense of unity took hold.

By spring, the Continental Army marched out of Valley Forge stronger, leaner, and better prepared. The bitter season had not broken them — it had transformed them into a force capable of challenging the world's strongest empire. Valley Forge became a crucible of American resolve, where sacrifice shaped the future of a nation.

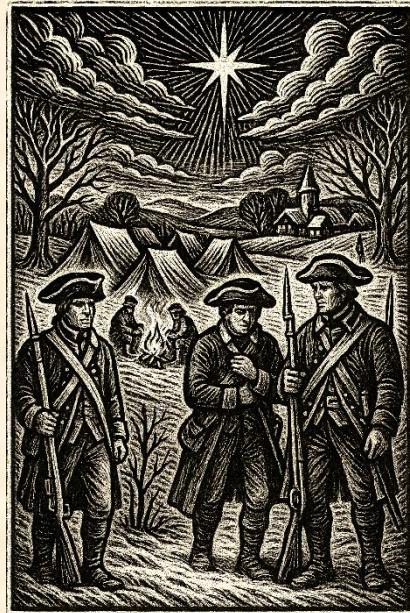
A Revolutionary Christmas Sonnet

Upon the frozen fields where freedom calls,
Beneath the winter's cloak of frost and snow,
Brave soldiers stand as twilight gently falls,
Their steadfast hearts alight with sacred glow.

No garlands deck their tents, no festive cheer,
Save for the whispers carried on the breeze.
Yet in their hearts, warm hopes for loved ones near,
Transform the biting cold to memories.

They dream of hearths aglow and children's mirth,
Of candlelight that dances soft and bright,
While pledging liberty its rightful birth,
Through endless marches and the perilous fight.

O Christmas star, shine
on their noble way,
And grant them peace
to greet a brighter day.



THE STRAIGHT-LACED SOLDIER'S LAMENT

The shoes of the period where shoes are formed on "Straight Last" meaning there will be no left or right when new. They are designed to be worn with genuine shoe buckles, not the tie-on imitations. There were both straight last and left/right or "crooked" colonial shoes. The straight last is more correct for the ordinary persona of the Colonial period, but the crooked last is more comfortable. After being worn a few times, a straight lasted shoe soon molds itself to your foot. A myth was to never swap shoes and is but a faint foundation in history.



The Straight-Laced Soldier's Lament

A continental soldier, brave and bold,
Had shoes that were neither left nor right, I'm told.
Straight lasted, they were, for both his feet,
A revolutionary fashion, oh so neat!

He marched all day in his ambidextrous boots,
With genuine buckles, not imitation substitutes.
"Don't swap your shoes!" the sergeant would yell,
A myth that made our soldier's toes rebel.

His right foot cried, "I want to be left!"
His left foot sighed, "Of comfort, I'm bereft!"
But soon enough, they molded to his soles,
Though marching still took its tolls.

He dreamed of crooked shoes, so comfy and fine,
But straight lasts were all the continental line.
In battles fierce, he'd fight with might,
While his feet couldn't tell their left from right!

So next time you see a colonial feat,
Remember the shoes that confused their feet.
For in revolution, they took a stand,
With footwear as straight as the new-born land!

HARDTACK AND CORN

During the American Revolutionary War, the life of a soldier was as much a battle against hunger as it was against the British. Among the most common — and least celebrated — staples of their diet werehardtack and corn.



Hardtack, a simple mixture of flour and water baked into dense, rock-hard biscuits, was designed more for durability than taste. Soldiers often joked that it could break teeth, and many soaked it in broth, coffee, or even rainwater to soften its iron-like texture. In the worst cases, hardtack came with weevils, adding unexpected protein to the meal.

Corn, on the other hand, was served boiled, ground, or sometimes as a porridge known as "hulled corn" or "hominy." Though bland and monotonous, corn was filling and a reliable source of energy, especially during long marches or the harsh winters, like the one endured at Valley Forge.

Despite the poor quality and limited variety of these rations, American soldiers endured — driven by their commitment to the cause of liberty. Hardtack and corn became symbols of both hardship and the iron resolve of those who fought for independence.

Hardtack and Corn or The Soldier's Culinary Woes

There once was a soldier so brave,
Who fought for our freedom to save.
But his rations, oh dear, Left much to be feared,
A diet that no one would crave.

Hardtack, that brick-like affair,
Could shatter his teeth without care.
He'd soak it in broth, Or gnaw like a sloth,
Praying his gums wouldn't bare.

And then came the corn, oh so bland,
Boiled to a pulp, quite unmanned.
He'd slurp it down fast, For flavor didn't last,
In this military planned.

Yet through hunger and hardship galore,
Our soldier stood firm to the core.
With hardtack and corn, His battles were borne,
A hero like none before.

So raise a glass to those valiant men,
Who saved our young nation back then.
Though their food was a plight, They stood strong for
the fight,
True patriots, again and again.

THE RAMROD'S FLIGHT

The poem is based on historical accounts of Continental soldiers during the American Revolutionary War. The incident described—firing a ramrod—was actually a common enough occurrence in the heat of battle that it was documented in several military accounts from the period.



The Ramrod's Flight

Amidst the clash of musket fire,
The battle's roar, a soldier's ire,
A misstep made in haste's embrace,
A ramrod flew instead of lead's embrace.

With fumbling hands and heart's pounding beat,
He loaded wrong in war's heated feat,
The ramrod slipped, a hapless plight,
Sailing forth instead of bullet's might.

A comrade's laugh rang out in jest,
As the slim rod cut through the smoky crest,
A harmless arc, a futile throw,
Aimed true, yet void of battle's woe.

The soldier flushed, his pride now torn,
Amidst the fray, a lesson borne,
To load with care, aim true and straight,
Lest ramrods fly instead of lead's hot weight.

In annals writ, this tale shall live,
Of ramrods launched, a tale to give,
A glimpse into the human side,
Of those who fought, who bled, who tried.

ABOUT THE POEM

The poem “The Kings Mountain Messenger” is an excerpt from the book “House of the Messenger – Recovery and Reconstruction of the Kings Mountain Messenger’s Dogtrot House”.



The Kings Mountain Messenger

In Tennessee's wild realm, a stalwart soul,
Joseph Greer, with courage as his goal,
From Kings Mountain's fierce fray, he swiftly came,
A herald of triumph, bearer of acclaim.

Through perils vast, unwavering, and bold,
He carried victory's tale, a story told,
From Congress' hall to battlefield's fierce roar,
Greer's legend blooms, forever to explore.

With sturdy frame and heart that blazed anew,
Through untamed wilds, avoiding dangers true,
From Indians' watch to Red Coats on the prowl,
And Tory militia, threats that did foul.

Musket and compass, guides on his quest,
He ventured forth, by honor's call impressed.
In Tennessee's embrace, his legacy thrives,
A hero's journey, through history's lives.

Greer's memory, beneath vast skies we store,
Kings Mountain's Messenger, forevermore.

ABOUT THE POEM

The poem "The Overmountain Men and Kings Mountain" is an excerpt from the book "House of the Messenger – Recovery and Reconstruction of the Kings Mountain Messenger's Dogtrot House".

Kings Mountain

In *The Winning of the West*, Theodore Roosevelt wrote of Kings Mountain, "This brilliant victory marked the turning point of the American Revolution." Thomas Jefferson called it "The turn of the tide of success". President Herbert Hoover at Kings Mountain said,

"This is a place of inspiring memories. Here less than a thousand men, inspired by the urge of freedom, defeated a superior force entrenched in this strategic position. This small band of Patriots turned back a dangerous invasion well designed to separate and dismember the United Colonies. It was a little army and a little battle, but it was of mighty portent. History has done scant justice to its significance, which rightly should place it beside Lexington, Bunker Hill, Trenton, and Yorktown."

In 1931, the Congress of the United States created the Kings Mountain National Military Park. (DYKEMAN, 1978)

The Overmountain Men and Kings Mountain

In the heartland of Appalachia, where mountains loom high,
A tale of valor and freedom reaches for the sky.
Let me tell you now of the Overmountain Men,
And the battle of Kings Mountain, where legends began.

In the late days of autumn, seventeen eighty,
The winds whispered secrets; the land grew weighty.
Across the Carolina plains, a call to arms was heard,
A gathering of heroes, their spirits undisturbed.

From the valleys and hollers they emerged, brave and bold,
Frontiersmen, farmers, with stories yet untold.
These Overmountain Men, rugged and true,
Took up their muskets, for freedom they knew.

Through treacherous terrain, they marched with resolve,
Each step, a testament to the spirit they evolved.
Over creeks and through forests, they pressed ahead,
Their purpose resolute, as they were led.

Up Kings Mountain they climbed, like lions to their den,
In pursuit of liberty, against the Tory men.
With rifles steady, and fire in their eyes,
They faced their enemies, beneath the Carolina skies.

The battle ensued, a clash of iron and might,
A symphony of musket fire, in the dimming light.
Bravery and determination coursed through their veins,
As they fought for their freedom and broke their chains.

They closed in on their foes, in a final, desperate bout,
Each shot a prayer, each charge a resolute shout.
And in that fateful hour, victory was seized,
As the Overmountain Men fought, and their enemies appeased.

The Battle of Kings Mountain, a turning point it proved,
A blow to tyranny, a triumph that moved.
These Overmountain Men, with hearts strong and true,
Their courage and sacrifice forever imbued.

So let us remember, with reverence and pride,
The Overmountain Men, who stood side by side.
In the annals of history, their legacy shall remain,
As heroes of freedom, their valor will sustain.



THE RYE-REVERED RYE OF MOUNT

In 1799, George Washington's distillery produced nearly 11,000 gallons, making it one of the largest whiskey distilleries in America. The original recipe for Washington's whiskey was discovered by researchers examining the Distillery ledgers from 1798 and 1799. His whiskey consisted of 60% rye, 35% corn, and 5% malted barley. Washington's interest in the distillery operation was further heightened by the acknowledgment that much of the waste (or slop) from the fermentation process could be fed to his growing number of hogs. Washington smartly created a hog pen near the distillery, which held upwards of 150 pigs. In fact, the size of the distilling operation was so large that reports indicate slop was being carted to the other farms at Mount Vernon as well.

This humorous poem is about George Washington's whiskey distillery at Mount Vernon:



The Rye-Revered Rye of Mount Vernon

Our founding father raised his glass
To whiskey born on his estate
From rye and corn and barley mass
A spirit bold to celebrate!

At Mount Vernon the stills were lit
By bonfire bright as cherry red
While Farmer George observed each bit
Of precious mash get spirit-fed

Sixty percent rye ryed the rye
(A patriot's pour if ere there was!)
With corn to add some oompha, oh my
And barley malts to lend a buzz

From tun to mill to cool fermenter
The flow of golden dreams distilled
Until at last, the whiskey's center
The copper stole exhaled, buck-thrilled!

Out flowed ambrosia, batches grand
Aged under watchful master's eye
"This rye's the reddest rye in the land!"
George hollered with a hick'ry cry

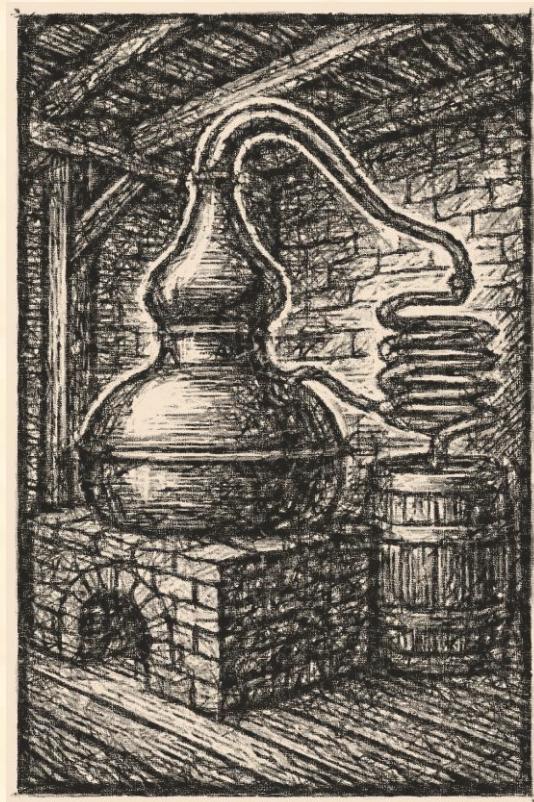
But wait, what's this? A feared foul scent?
Is demon drink distressing dear old Mount?
It's naught but the distillery's heaven-sent
Hog fuel! Porky share of the bount'

Towards the pig pens, bushels of slop

Were carted for the swilling swine
Those sated sows could never stop
George's whiskey at the trough divine

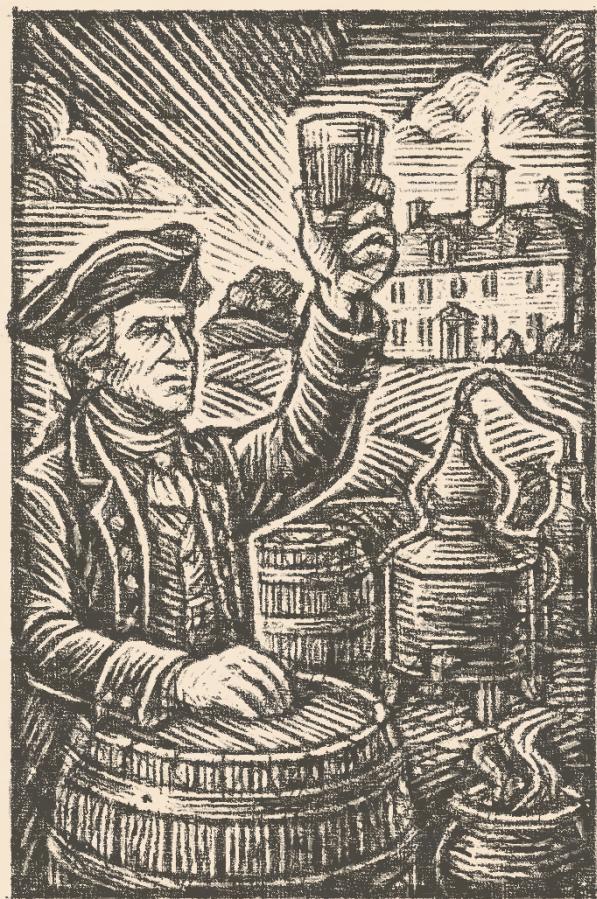
The looping flows of rye liquor
And hog feed cast a splendid scene
Where statesman still and filthy icker
Effused a legacy pur-lean!

So raise your glass to freedom's fire
That glowed within the upstart stills
Rye-revered rye, Mount Vernon's pyre
Of liberty on rolling hills!



A TOAST TO THE WHISKEY OF MOUNT

Here's a toast poem celebrating George Washington's whiskey at Mount Vernon:



A Toast to the Whiskey of Mount Vernon

Raise your glasses, one and all!
To the whiskey of renown
Distilled at our founding father's call
On the rolling hills and fertile ground

A spirit forged of grain and glory
Rye, corn and barley malts combined
Its recipe a storied story
Of liberty's brew, rebel-designed

Sixty percent rye ryed the rye
Bold leadership in that ruddy pour
With corn's sweet oompha standing by
And barley's roasty, rousing core

From tun to still the batches flowed
'Neath master's eye and cherry glow
Then into casks the liquorowed
To season, pure Virginia show

So let us drink to the independence
That fired those stills at Mount Vernon
A smoky toast with thirst adherence
To the whiskey of George Washington!

About the poem Gray Veil of Liberty

The humid air hung heavy over the battlefield as the British line advanced, their red coats stark against the knee-high grass. The sun glinted off their bayonets, casting sharp reflections as they marched in unison, the rhythmic beat of drums guiding their steps.

On the other side, the Patriots stood resolute. The militia formed the front line, with the Continental soldiers providing steadfast support from behind. The British troops halted, poised to unleash their deadly assault. Muskets were raised, and in a synchronized motion, they fired their thunderous volley.



The air was instantly filled with the gray cloud of smoke from the musket fire, quickly met by the Patriots' own barrage. Two veils of smoke merged in the chaotic dance of battle, the acrid scent of sulfur permeating the air and filling the minds of every soldier present.

Within this shroud of smoke and chaos, death claimed its toll. Souls departed their earthly vessels, ascending beyond the gray skies that bore witness to the grim spectacle below. The battlefield, now a somber testament to the ferocity of war, echoed with the memories of those who fought and fell.

Gray Veil of Liberty

Through humid air, the British line advances,
Red-coated soldiers wade through knee-high grass.

The sun on bayonets gleams as it glances,
While drums command their solemn steps to pass.

Patriots stand firm, militia at the fore,
Continental soldiers steady at their back.
The British halt as one, to wage their war,
Muskets raised in deadly, grim attack.

Then burst the gray cloud from their thunderous volley,
Answered swift by patriot fire in kind.
Two veils of smoke converge in battle's folly,
As sulfur's scent fills every soldier's mind.

Within this shroud, death claims its mortal prize,
While souls, released, ascend beyond gray skies.

Haiku' for You

Haiku is a traditional Japanese form of poetry that captures the essence of nature in a concise and evocative manner. Characterized by its 5-7-5 syllable pattern, a haiku is known for its brevity and ability to evoke a sense of beauty, wonder, or mystery in just a few words. These poems often focus on the natural world, capturing fleeting moments and the changing seasons with vivid imagery and deep emotional resonance.

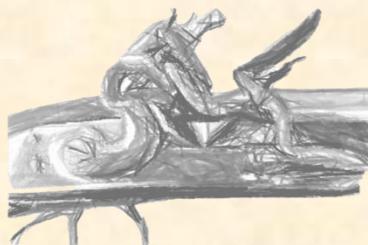
The haiku's simplicity belies its depth, as each word is carefully chosen to convey a profound experience or observation. This form of poetry encourages mindfulness and a deep connection with the environment, inviting readers to pause and reflect on the beauty and transience of life.

These Haiku are a brief representation of reflective thought of patriots over the ages.

Haiku

Flintlock

Black powder ignites
Flintlock rifle's fiery blast
Smoke trail hangs in air



Wood Canteen

Wooden canteen worn
Carrying life's liquid gold
Poor Soldier

Cornbread

Golden cornbread baked
Crumbly texture, buttery
Colonial feast

Whiskey

Amber liquid fire
Burning throat with potent kick
Frontier's loyal friend

These short poetic remembrances were published in past newsletters of the Joseph Greer Chapter of the Tennessee Society, Sons of the American Revolution (TNSSAR) and the subject's appeal.

Author

Rick Laws, President of the Joseph Greer Chapter of the Tennessee Society, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR), hails from the historically rich region of East Tennessee, home to legends like Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett. A retired U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer, Rick's career spanned global support for combat engineering operations.

During his distinguished military service, Rick contributed to critical projects, including patrolling the East-West German inter-zonal border, bridge building in Belize, participating in relief efforts in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and serving in combat engineering missions in Southwest Asia during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He also played a key role as an assistant to the Inspector General for the Eighth Army Headquarters in Korea. Rick's achievements were recognized with numerous honors, including the Bronze Star Medal, four Meritorious Service Medals (MSM), and the prestigious De Fleury Medallion from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Rick holds a Master of Science in Information Management Systems (MS-MIS) from Florida Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from the University of New York. He has also earned the SOLE Demonstrated Master Logistician (DML) designation, completed post graduate studies at the University of Alabama, Huntsville and possesses certifications from the Defense Acquisition University (DAU) in logistics and information systems.

Also by Rick Laws

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